

HINTS TO



YOUNG SPORTSMEN



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John Walter

HINTS
TO
YOUNG SPORTSMEN;
OR,
THE GUN, SADDLE, AND ROD.

BY
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WOODLANDS, STONE, KENT.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE often thought those who take the liberty of giving advice to others unasked for, or those who address the public in any way, ought to offer some apology, or show some good reason for so doing; the only apology I can make, or the only reason I can offer, is a hearty desire to give hints that may be useful to young sportsmen, and to say those hints are given after sixty years of experience in the field with the gun, with both fox-hounds and harriers, on the saddle, and by the streamlet's side with the fly rod; and should this little work prove beneficial in any way, it will confer a great pleasure on an old sportsman.

HINTS TO YOUNG SPORTSMEN.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE GUN, AND THE PROPER WAY OF USING IT.

IN the first place I would most earnestly impress on the minds of all, when the gun is first taken in hand, the great care that is required in its use, and to recollect not only their own lives, but those of their companions; the happiness and welfare of families depend on the proper handling or carrying of the gun, for on these two things safety depends. I do not know of anything where a person looks more awkward and more ridiculous than carrying a gun improperly; and, on the other hand, there is even an ease and elegance in its being properly done, which is, for the most part, only acquired by constant use. I shall endeavour to point out in several ways the proper method of its being used, and also to notice the improper manner, which is too often the case even with men who have shot for years. As a great preventive to accidents always think a gun is loaded if you even know to the contrary; it will prevent a carelessness in its handling, and, though harmless, it may frequently alarm others

who are not aware of it. Never leave a gun loaded about a house unless for protection, and properly put away in a secure place. Never carry a gun loaded in a carriage, which is always liable to accidents. In walking to your shooting, which is frequently at a considerable distance, and frequently through narrow lanes, with friends or persons behind you, the most sportsmanlike method and the safest, is to rest the gun on your shoulder, the hammers nearest the back, the butt held in your left hand; in this way, the gun being crooked, the top or muzzle is pointed so high that it would be impossible to harm those behind you. I must here add this caution: be extremely careful not to let the butt slip from the hand; on the contrary, carrying a gun with the butt in the left hand, the hammers *uppermost and before the shoulder*, looks most awkward, and is much more like the village volunteer than a sporting man. Another way is by keeping the right elbow close to the body, bringing the hand forward, and resting the gun on the arm with the guard close to it; and for change the gun may be grasped by the hand just before the lock, and, being pointed to the ground, gives an easy appearance as well as great safety. In the field either of the methods may be used. Let it be here recollected that a person walking on the left is always in the most dangerous position, particularly if the person on the right carries his gun in the usual manner, when expecting game to rise, which is by grasping the barrel with the left hand five or six inches above the lock, the right holding the small of the

stock just below the guard, the gun crossing the body toward the left side; and, by so doing, the gun is constantly pointed towards those on the left side. When walking on the right the safest method is by carrying the gun over the right shoulder, the hammers nearest the body or before the shoulder, and the hand round the small of the stock, which not only makes those perfectly safe on the left, but, on game rising, the gun is always ready. I have no doubt by some I shall be thought over particular, but this I know, you cannot be too careful. Let these rules be practised with a gun not loaded.

Now comes the choice of a gun, and, as I feel to be addressing beginners in the sporting line, shall suppose they will have to exercise their taste. If you were to ask many, who have shot for years, you will find one shooting with a crooked gun, and shooting well; another with a very straight one, and shooting equally well. I am certain it is constant use that makes straight or crooked preferred. I must say, as it is with most things, a happy medium is best. It is my opinion that a straight gun is best; one on bringing it quickly to the shoulder, coming up to the object, or even a little over it, at once, without even looking at the gun, or, as some call it, "aiming," a word which I *detest*. One reason for preferring a straight, or even a very straight gun is, that game within shot is always rising, and it is much more likely to shoot under a bird with a crooked than with a straight one.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE PROPER METHOD OF SHOOTING.

Now, having got our new gun, and with a little practice of the past know how to handle it with ease and elegance, which means with safety to our friends as well as ourselves, we may now begin to think of danger to game. To be a good shot, not even thinking of being a fine one, will not be acquired at once; indeed there are many who shoot all their lifetime and never succeed. There are many things to be conquered as well as learnt and made acquainted with. Theory is all very well, but it is constant practice that makes the accomplished man in everything. It is very well to tell a beginner what he should do, but it is not so easy for him to do it. Here lies the grand secret and foundation of shooting well, and of making a fine shot: it is all centered in one short word, “*nerve.*” What makes Blondin perform so many wonders on the rope? what makes those wonderful riders in the circus? what makes the sailor run out on the main-yard without even touching anything? what makes the man address a large meeting with perfect composure?—NERVE. And let me assure you this will make you a *fine* shot *possessing* it; and without it you never will. You will get it by constant shooting and practice. Few men can walk up to dogs standing at game, and knowing birds are before them,

without some little nervous feeling. I also must impress on you, never let shooting straight take possession of your mind; my reason for saying so, I think I shall have no difficulty in making apparent;—as in billiards, every ball wants playing in a different manner to obtain the object wished for, so in shooting every bird requires the gun held in a different position; great allowance to be made for distance, direction of flight, &c., &c., which I will endeavour to explain. A bird getting up and going straight away, by many is considered an easy shot; it may be so; but when birds are strong, and get up seven or eight rods away, they will be missed if they are not well covered; that is, the gun ought to be held three or four inches over their backs, or the shot will pass under them. A bird coming to you, and particularly when he has flown some distance, is a very difficult shot; the gun then requires to be held eight or ten inches above and before the bird, or it would be shot under considerably. A bird flying to your left obliquely requires the gun eight or ten inches clear of the left side; just so a bird flying to the right, up the right side. I allude to birds getting up six or eight rods from you, but at a greater distance, and, when strong on the wing, the gun ought to be held double the distance just mentioned. I have seen good shots, that have always been used to an open country, shoot badly in an enclosed spot where hedges were high and fields small, for this reason, the birds were shot under, not having allowed for their rapid rising over hedges; birds thus flying want the gun held above them six inches.

CHAPTER III.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING, HUNTING GROUND, AND MARKING.

Now let us suppose that longed-for day, the 1st of September, has arrived, a day anxiously looked for by thousands, and by those who have shot for many days, as well as those who call it *their first day*, as well as the first of *partridge shooting*; though it may seem strange to many, it is not more strange than true, that the anticipation of the sport is the occasion of many sleepless nights. I once went to the farm-house where I was going to shoot the following day, and so eager was I for morning to come, that I went to bed exceedingly early; disturbed in my first sleep, I counted *every hour* through the night till five in the morning, and glad enough I was to hear my man call, and say he had brought the dogs. I always make it a rule, on leaving home, to call over everything that I may possibly want; it frequently prevents your going without something that would occasion much trouble to obtain, or mar your sport. Never leave without a chain to fasten your dog or dogs up securely, while you perhaps are gone in to breakfast, or into a house merely for a short time; for often I have known a dog to miss his master, and run home many miles away; also be careful never to tie a dog up near anything he can jump over, and not being able to reach the ground he is hung. I once knew a beautiful setter, fastened to a halter in a spare stall, lose his life in this way. When he was left he was called Don, and when

they came again he might have been called Dangle; having jumped over the stall, and, not being able to touch the ground with his feet, was dead. We will now start for our day's sport. First look for the point the wind blows from, then sink your wind, that is, go down the wind to the extreme outside of the land that you are going to shoot over, or have a *right to shoot over*; by thus doing you gain a double advantage, your dogs get the wind, then there is no excuse for their not finding birds, and you also most likely keep the birds before you, and on your own ground. If you are out early, which is the most pleasant time of the day, hunt the stubble or corn land first, and particularly those fields lying to the sun, for game, like poultry, always prefer warmth.

To ho! Don stands! Now for your first shot. Now for your honour—this is to be the first partridge you ever shot at!—*now*, though you have made up your mind to be calm and not in a hurry, will you tell me you can go up to your dogs without a tremulous and nervous feeling? I think *not*; after all these good determinations, just as you are getting up to your dogs, up get fourteen or fifteen birds rather before you expected them; they cross each other, and seem all confusion. If you can still continue as calm as you made up your mind to be, can keep both your eyes open, then you are possessed of that one word—NERVE; but I should rather think you had deceived yourself. You shot in a great hurry, and if you tell the truth, when your finger pressed the trigger, you never saw a bird at all. Do not think I am severe with a beginner, or think this picture is over-coloured, or would dis-

courage; for I will confess, though I have shot as well as most men, and have killed as much game, I know this feeling to be true, and will confess at times, even when I was in practice, I have done the same. I have omitted to say much pleasure is obtained in friends shooting together, by never crossing or shooting at a bird, which gets up before those you are shooting with, and, according to the rules of sporting, did not belong to you. When a covey rises, if you are walking to the left, fix your eye on the outside bird nearest to you, and never let your eye be taken off, for the first sight is always best. If a single bird gets up between two persons, he belongs to those to whom he inclines. When a bird is shot never run or hurry to pick it up; it spoils dogs, causes confusion, very likely flushes other birds, and looks anything but like a sportsman. Load your gun first, let your retriever find the bird, and, should the bird have run, find the spot where he fell, which you will do by the feathers on the ground; show your dog the place, and if the dog is worth keeping the bird is yours. When birds are once found it is right to mark them down if possible, and to generally follow them. Here let me observe, to make a good marker requires much practice. Keep your eyes steadily on the covey; never fancy they are down because they sink low to the ground, which they almost always do, and then will seem to glide for a field or two; if you lose sight of them, keep your eyes well forward in the direction they have been going, and, as they always throw their wings up on dropping, it produces a sort of light; seeing this, you may be sure they are down.

If you go at once, and know the spot where they dropped to a yard, do not imagine you will find them exactly there; for birds generally run some distance after. If you do not begin to shoot till late, or in the middle of the day, hunt your green crops, such as lucern, sanfoin lays, turnips, &c.; many a brown dry-looking field will hold your birds, particularly broadshired ground, for in hot and dry weather here they like to lay, and dust themselves; one-year old coppice, and even two-years' old is also a favourite spot in the middle of the day. Having given hints on partridge shooting, I feel it useless to say more on the subject; only to add, loud talking and that shrill whistle will at all times spoil sport, for birds are very clever, and on hearing it, will frequently be up and off. I have no doubt, by following these rules, by keeping calm and quiet, and not forgetting the word "Nerve," you will soon become a good shot, and have no reason to find fault with your bag, and when it is made, to your satisfaction you will have yet much enjoyment to come, after a good day's sport. Having fresh dressed, you will find, on going into the drawing-room, and sitting down on the sofa, there is much truth in the old Latin line, "*Fessus juvat quietem.*" I have no doubt you will enjoy a good dinner, and I am sure you will say the champagne never went down so cold and refreshing. I have not done yet. When the ladies have left the table, you will have to talk over the day's sport, and kill your birds over again; and all the reward I want is for you to drink my health, and say, "The old gentleman, I think, was about right in his advice."

CHAPTER IV.

ON PHEASANT SHOOTING.

HAVING said so much about the method of shooting in the last chapter, this will not be a long one. A good day's pheasant shooting in a country well wooded, with plenty of coppice and shaws, and a fair number of birds, is a treat fit for a Prince. I do not mean with half the boys in the village, with sticks and clappers; Master Ferret-hole, the rat-catcher, with his dogs; the blacksmith, with two pieces of iron; a keeper or two, crying, "*Forward, on the left,*" making you think a fort was to be stormed, instead of which twenty or thirty brace of well-fed birds are driven up into a corner—I won't say to be shot, but to be slaughtered;—I do not mean this sort of sport, if it can be called sport. No! I want to see you, of a fine October morning, after an early breakfast, quietly going into some fine covert, whose tints, with the morning sun upon them, surpass all the colours Raphaele or Rubens ever got on their palette; your brace of fine setters behind you, and your man pointing out six or seven brace of birds in a stubble adjoining the wood: this is the sort of shooting I enjoyed for many years. I cannot refrain from relating what happened to me once on the 1st of October, on the sort of morning just described, on my way to my own land. I walked up

a road, just inside of a large wood, not intending to shoot. Having got opposite my own field, I quietly went to the edge of the wood, and what did I behold on eight acres of barley stubble?—eight and twenty pheasants feeding, and spread over every part of it. At the end there was about half an acre of woodland, into which every bird ran, except one cunning old cock. Now for *nerve*. Having my two sons with me, I made the eldest hold the dogs, the wood being too high to shoot in. I sent the youngest into the wood, to drive the birds up, and told him to stand still every time I shot. I then placed myself between this spot and the large wood; the birds were exceedingly cunning, for many flew out on the opposite side from me; after all, I shot three brace and a half, one bird fell in the wood, winged, which I got afterwards—a *very good beginning*.

I left you just going into the cover, which the birds your man saw will all run into at the least noise. To make a good pheasant shot, requires much practice; many persons think they are a large bird, and easily killed; just at the beginning of the season, they may be; but when they get old and wild, it is quite the contrary, for many reasons. On going into cover, always select a one-year old coppice, laying next a stubble, to begin with; never hunt the side near the stubble first, for this reason. If birds have just run in from their feed, and you are behind them, a great many will run away to the high wood at the first shot. Go round your coppice next the high wood first, then work it back cross-ways, towards the outside; you will then be between the wood and

your birds, which will cause them to lay like stones ; it is also right to hunt those coppices which lay towards the morning sun ; they dry first, are warmer, and I can assure you no birds are more fond of sun than pheasants. I have seen them after a wet morning, at the sun's first rays, sitting on the top of a hedge ; and here let me remark, you cannot be too quiet, or hunt your ground too slowly. Those that attend to this will always find most game ; and I have even found it a good plan, when you have hunted a coppice over, to turn round and hunt it back again, and many a bird I have found in that way. In the middle of the day you will find your birds on brakey banks and open places, in high wood, particularly those out of the wind and warm. Pheasants lay very still in the middle of the day, and leave very little haunt for dogs to touch upon. I have seen many a bird laying under a stub like a hare in her seat, and will continue still till you pass them. The best time for sport is from seven till nine in the morning, and from three till five in the afternoon. At this time they are on the move, and dogs must touch on their haunts. These hints will prove useful, and ought never to be forgotten. Birds are very apt to fly low, at the early part of the season ; and in two and three years' old coppice it is very dangerous to shoot at them, and particularly when the leaf has not fallen, unless you know for certain where those are, who are shooting with you. Many persons, who are good partridge shots and in the open, are not good shots in covert ; there always seems something in the way ; large leafy ash stubs,

thick places, and they wait for a better sight ; to be a good wood shot, a man should never hesitate, or think of these things ; the first sight is best ; never fear shooting, but recollect the shot will find its way through ; a pheasant is always rising, and very fast, at times, therefore keep the gun well over him. I think enough has been said on pheasant shooting to make a person, who has not been acquainted with the sport, to go into covert as a sportsman ; at any rate, I am certain these remarks will prove useful.

Before we leave the wood, we may as well have a hunt with the rabbit beagles, and when a man has about two couples and a half really good—and to get them so it is always best to have them of one litter, if not all puppies, of one age, and brought up together, they will then be free from jealousy, hunt well together, and never go away to other dogs ; on the contrary, if you were to get three couples of the best beagles that could be found, from different persons, they scarcely ever hunt well together, they all like to be their own masters, and are always jealous of one another, which causes them to get away, and they scarcely are ever worth shooting to. Beagles should not be too fast for rabbits ; this being the case, they will not stand a good hunt, but go to ground. The best method to get shots is to stand in a road where rabbits cross, and always select those places where you see the most runs, and where they are most used. Look for large oaks ; under them you will generally find an open place, and well used by rabbits ; also notice, when a rabbit is found, the spot which it passes in his first circle which he makes, for they generally run in a

ring, and where he has once been, he will run again, where there are large earths, and they go to ground quickly ; here you will find a good spot to get shots. I must give these cautions in shooting with beagles ; it requires great care. Rabbits, when well hunted, very frequently lay down, and jump up with the beagles around them. The rabbit gets from them far enough to be shot at with safety ; but just as you shoot, one of the beagles, which was perhaps a little behind, comes from behind a stub, makes a rush at the rabbit, and it is not the first time I have seen both rolled over together, and the dog killed. Let me here remark that many persons object to beagle shooting in coverts, when they have pheasants ; they think it disturbs them, and drives them away. I believe it to be a wrong idea. I have had plenty of pheasants on my coverts, and have continually hunted them ; a pheasant seldom gets up before a beagle, but runs, and jumps up on a stub or saddle. This it does for certain. Find out if wires are set in the wood, and will not, perhaps, be detected by the best of keepers. I once recollect four brace of hares being taken out of wires in one wood, which would have belonged to the poachers if we had not been hunting there. Before we leave the wood we must not pass so bad a compliment to a bird so beautiful in every way as the woodcock. They generally are found in our coverts about the first week in November, and arrive after a strong northeasterly wind. In hunting for cocks I have always found them fond of lying just at the edge of high wood, adjoining to a one-year old coppice. As they

always settle backwards, they like an open spot where to drop; open places on a dry brakey bank are also favourite places; again, under large oak trees, where the underwood does not grow. It is not known by every person that cocks fly every evening at twilight, and in the same light of a morning. It is wonderful in the spring, when waiting at flight time, to notice with what regularity birds cease from singing, and go to rest. At that time of year, the woods seem to vibrate with the songs of birds; the blackbird sings late; the thrush later; the blackbird makes a twittering noise, and goes to roost; the thrush will sing, sitting on the top of an oak, for a few minutes longer, and his day's work is over. Then the woods seem still and lonely; in a few seconds you hear the owl, and then the cocks begin to fly, which only lasts a short time. Having flown round the wood a few times, as if to stretch their wings, then away to feed in some swamp; they seldom move of a day, unless flushed by dogs, or disturbed in other ways. I have seen them lay under a stub as if sitting on a nest. In addition to the woodcock's good quality for the table, as well as his beautiful plumage, he presents the artist with his most delicate and fine-pointed brush for finishing the highest class miniatures. The snipe must not be forgotten, as I think it is the most elegant of all game, and his plumage may vie with the woodcock. No tints die away so fast, after being killed, as the feathers of the snipe. Their haunts are so well known that it is almost unnecessary to speak of them. It frequently happens, when there is a great

width of marsh, that those laying nearest to the upland have spring ditches that never freeze ; this is the spot of all others. In 1837, the winter was very severe, commencing with three days' gale of wind, and freezing severely. I went into the marsh late, to wait for duck ; it was getting dusk, the snipes got up in all directions. I had time to kill three couples and a half. I could scarcely sleep for thinking of them ; up to breakfast long before light, and down to the spot before I could see ; bitterly cold, and the moon looking as red as blood ; just snow enough to make the ground white. As soon as I could see about eight rods I went to work, and before ten o'clock I had ten couples of snipes, and only one jack, all in fine condition. Some persons will tell you always wait till your bird has taken a turn or two ; if I had done so, I should not have had my ten couples. The way to shoot a snipe, is to take your turn at him as quickly as possible before he can get fast on wing ; if not, I will bet long odds against you. Always go down wind in trying your ditches, as a snipe almost always flies up wind ; and if he should get up too far off he will often pass you, and give you the fairest of shots. Sincerely hoping beginners will derive some benefit from the sport we have had, I shall say no more for the gun, only do not forget the short word *Nerve*.

CHAPTER V.

HINTS ON FOX-HUNTING.

“WHAT’S so graceful, light, and airy,
Whose every step is like a fairy?
His coat so sleek, his brush tipt white,
His ears and padds as dark as night;
Form’d in nature’s happiest hours
To grace the woodland’s shadiest bowers:
With his soft, cunning, pensive eye,
He’s worried, hunted, made to die.
No moonbeam, ever shining bright,
Flits o’er the meadows half so light;
He gives you sport, day after day,
His *one request*—*give me FAIR PLAY.*”

In commencing this chapter on fox-hunting, I cannot help repeating what I expressed at the commencement, that it is addressed to those who only hunt a few times in the season, and who never have had the opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the sport. I shall endeavour to give hints to them; some in a direct manner, and some in the description of the chase generally.

There is no doubt that, centuries ago, foxes, like wolves, were a nuisance, when England was almost covered with wood and forest, and it became absolutely necessary to destroy them; hunting was always a reigning passion with the ancient Briton, and that passion still exists, only carried out in a

different and expensive manner. Tracking in the snow, with dogs of every description, was then the method used, and considered the most favourable time, and the sport eagerly looked forward to.

After many years the breed of hounds was improved, and, like plants after careful cultivation, they were brought to their present perfection; and if our forefathers could be aware of the fabulous price made of our best fox-hounds, it would have caused an astonishment not to be explained. Fox-hunting has its list of pleasures; it is not only while hounds are running, that pleasure exists. There is the looking forward to the hunting morning, the anticipation of the sport, and here let me add,—

“ Imagination holds a mighty sway
O'er all our pleasures, day by day.”

The cheerful morning ride to cover—the power that hunting has of putting away anxiety and worldly cares—the pleasure felt at the change of scene; and they must have a cold heart indeed that can look on the ruddy brown tints of trees, lit up by the light of a cheerful sunny morning, without feelings of pleasure.

But to the

MEET.

Let me advise you, on a hunting morning, always to be up *in good time*, and always fix to start half an hour before the actual time necessary; and, believe me, you will always find that half hour consumed. To dress nicely for the field is not done in ten minutes: boots, spurs, and breeches require some

time to be well arranged; and here let me say, let your boots be as warm as possible, for if you leave it to servants they are brought cold and damp, and you have *cold feet* all day. By getting forward, your breakfast is enjoyed; and, I know by experience, a good breakfast is always a good start; not hurried—if so, you are cross with yourself and all around, and something is sure to be forgotten. You are now ready for your horse; and here let me advise you, however good servants may be, never get on your saddle without casting your eyes over bridle, curb, and girths; I always like to ride with three—two tight, and one rather slack. If you are not much accustomed to riding, recollect that a horse's pace depends entirely on the bridle being properly used, and the curb-rein is always dangerous in the hand of an inexperienced person. I should say, ride with the snaffle bit; and most horses, even if *hot* and *fidgetty*, go best on the snaffle. It is surprising what is to be done by soothing words to a horse, a handful of corn, and even a piece of bread. Before starting get your stirrups to their proper length. Do not ride with them too long. With respect to your position or seat on a horse, it is to be explained in a few words: Sit upright, with an ease and freedom, but not stiffly; keep your elbows within three or four inches of your body; never turn your toes out, but point them inwards to your horse's shoulder—this will bring your knees close to your saddle; and recollect your safety and good seat all rest with the grasp you have of your horse with the knee and calf of your leg. We are not getting to

our meet very fast, but I hope shall profit by our slow pace, and shall be better prepared when there. I have generally observed, if four or five men leave from the same neighbourhood to meet the hounds, they leave home a few minutes from one another, by which the pleasure of society is lost, and horses always travel best in company. After such a start as we have had, and having plenty of time, the ride is really enjoyed, and, if the distance is not great, it is really beneficial to your horse; and as the road generally is through country lanes, the very picturesque old cottages, and children to match, afford much amusement. Passing through such scenes as these, you are brought to the meet, perhaps some old bridge, or at the sign of the "Man in the Moon," a small public-house on a green. By your good morning arrangement, you have some minutes to spare, acceptable both to man and horse; it gives your horse a rest, you have time to loosen your girths, put your saddle back, and perhaps a good glass of ale will do you no harm.

On looking round, you will behold a sight pleasing in the extreme—a huntsman, and a couple of whips in scarlet, coming with a fine pack of hounds, sterns up, and coats as smooth as velvet, all rich in colour, forming a picture of the most pleasing description. I am sure all will agree with me, that hunting and the sight of a pack of beautiful fox-hounds bring with them a fascination not easily explained. The blacksmith throws down his hammer, the wheeler cannot stop in his shop, children run to the spot, even the old women come out to their garden gates, and few

there are on the village green can refrain coming to the meet; now from every point come horses of all colours and description, carriages of different shape and make, some fit for the park and some to burn; the old man in his donkey cart *must stop*, and has, I dare say, contrived to have business on the green just at this time. At one spot is a group of fashionable young men, enjoying their cigars, on horses of the first class and in the best condition, looking almost like racers, till, on close examination, you find strength and muscle up to twelve and thirteen stone. Horses like these are not bought for a song. At another point are ladies just leaving their carriages, or perhaps mounting their beautiful horses from them. To me there are few sights more gratifying than to see ladies perfectly masters of riding, and guiding their horses with a light and feathery hand, and sitting with perfect ease and elegance; and, to complete the scene, the butcher-boy with his basket, and without his hat, riding round, and scanning all, from the duke to the dustman, with perfect composure. Eleven o'clock has arrived, and, after a few words from the master of the hounds to the huntsman, away to the covert side.

Here I must caution all, whose horses are not often with hounds, to be particularly careful not to get near them, and mostly so in narrow lanes; as many horses, however quiet they may be, will kick or strike when hounds are near them, by which means many valuable ones are lamed or killed—a thing painful to the rider, as well as to those owning them. I must also say, before the hounds are

thrown into cover—the best time is while waiting at the meet—ask one of the whips to point out some gentleman who has known the country all his lifetime, and who does not pride himself on being always forward at starting, but is generally about the right place at last; stick close to him, you will not do better, or get across the country safer.

You have had my advice as to getting forward on a hunting morning, and the pleasure derived from it described; just let us fancy getting off late, and the vexations that follow. Instead of a good breakfast you have to hurry—scarcely time to sit down; your horse is brought at the time ordered; as you are not ready, he is standing about in the cold; in your hurry you have laid your watch and silver on the table, and left them behind, your cigar-case in some coat-pocket. At last you do get away, have to hurry and distress your horse, for every one that hunts cannot afford horses and grooms to go on, and yet enjoy their hunt; and, to add to your vexation, when you get near the place of meet, you see an old woodcutter in the lane, and the first thing you hear is, “Why, zur, how late you be! the hounds be found, and gone away pretty near a quarter of an hour ago.” Now fancy your feelings. Should you like to have your portrait taken just at this moment? What is to be done in such a case? Ask him what large covert the fox is likely to go away to, which is the best way across the country, ride a mile, or even two, down the wind. You will then, if you keep your ears open, hear them. Stand and listen on the top of some hill, and take notice of

your horse's ears, for he will hear hounds before you can. This is the only or most likely method to get up to them; it is of no use to ride after them, and try to hunt them along, as I have known novices do. Do you not think being early is best?

THE COVERT SIDE.

Now is the moment of excitement to all, and anxiety, particularly to those who are not often there; but that is partly removed from the foregoing advice. Now the huntsman throws his hounds into the covert with a cheering voice—"Hark in, hark in, harkee," and briskly trotting along; with a dash that makes every hound cause the wood to crack, and they fly away from his horse's heels like an avalanche, for nothing but death is before their eyes, every hound spreading like a rocket, and every hound is eager to touch on the first piece of drag. If you want to know the most pleasing moment to a real sportsman, it is when that soft, undecided, flute-like tongue is heard, *and is only heard*, when drag is first touched upon, and is so exquisitely enjoyable to a fox-hunter—"Hark to Lucifer, hark"—drag on him, good hounds; every moment the drag gets better; every moment the music increases; at last, "Tally-ho! tally-ho!" is heard. Now, whips, never mind your fox, get forward, and stop those excitable young riding d—s from heading him, for a fox well got away with, almost ensures a run; on the contrary, head him at first, and your day is generally spoilt. Never mind the holloa, huntsman!—hear their music, there's a rare good scent; they do not

want lifting; and when, or where, can such music be heard? Hold hard, gentlemen, don't leave the covert till he's well away; there is a burning scent; look at them streaming away; what a head they carry; now you may ride, and catch them if you can. You will see your best men, as they are called, strain every nerve, to be closest to the hounds; but mind, these are not often the best judges of hunting; they enjoy a sort of steeple-chasing, engrafted on legitimate hunting; they are not fond of a cold scent, when hounds have to get their noses down, and do not feel a pleasure in seeing them pick it along over ploughed land. Having kept close to the gentleman whom the whip first pointed out, it is a great chance but you are about the right place after the first half hour; they have gone very fast over the open, but now he has made the covert he ran for, his earth was stopped, and he is obliged to run very short, make all the work and shifts he can to recover himself; but a good fox, when he seems beaten, wants some killing. During this check, let me tell you that many a fox saves himself by jumping on to the top of a high stub, and then, by lying still, hounds will frequently pass close by him, he is left undisturbed; this check lets tail horses up, and is not unpleasant to some of the fast ones. Give your hounds time, huntsman, they will soon get at him again. The field ought now to keep well together, and give the fox every chance of getting away, not as I have seen, more to their shame, get round the wood, on all sides, giving him no chance to get away. Hark, there is a holloa forward, he has slipped

down under the hedge, and is gone ; hold hard, let the hounds get well settled to the scent again. Here is a chance for him, this dark stormy cloud and cold rain will take away all the scent ; now is the time to see hounds do their work ; see how they throw and cast for the scent, they have hit it off in the coppice ; they will do again now. Listen to your leading hounds, how beautifully they hunt him through this little covert ; though the scent is so bad, they are out, and if the scent improves die he must ; the cloud and rain have passed away ; look at Countess and Cheerful leading ; well-hunted good hounds—can anything be more beautiful ? By Jove, he is sinking the hill ; he is a game fox, he means crossing the meadows and brook, and will make for Lord's Wood, Great Earths ! if he reaches them, he is a wonder. My young friend, keep with your first companion ; he knows the way down the lane and over the bridge. Now is the time to see good riders take their fences, and do not forget it ; watch how they steady their horses and paces, before they come to those awkward rails ; how firm their hands, not pulling their horses, but with that determination that a horse knows, go he must. Here let me remark, if there is fear and a sort of doubt with the rider, his horse knows it, and it is ten to one but he gets a fall, either by hitting his fence or by stopping short. It is all very well to talk about fencing, but a man ought to well know what his horse can do before he attempts much ; recollect timber is dangerous at all times. Supposing you have been piloted over the bridge, you will find your field very select,

some in the brook and some over; some afraid to face it, and behind; some of the best well up to the hounds, racing over the grass. He will never reach the covert, he is only one field before them; see the man holding up his hat, they will view him in the next field; there he goes, only one field to the covert. Now for the struggle, he runs strong yet, if he can only hold one moment longer he will save his brush. Over the road he goes and into the earth, as game a fox as ever carried a brush. “Whoop whoop!” One hour and ten minutes; the pace very fast. The black cloud saved his life, by the check in the little covert. His going to earth would afford a good picture for a skilful artist. As we have not got one here, I must try and make a sketch on paper. Fancy a high sandy bank, overgrown with underwood, bushes, &c., at the side of a wide road; the terriers have gone into the earth, four or five couples of hounds around it, and scratching, so eager are they for the vermin, which they think they deserve. Two or three wood-cutters have brought their mattocks and spades, wanting a job to dig him out, but the ground is not to be disturbed—such a good fox will do for another day. Some of the other hounds stretched out their full length on the grass, others drawing themselves along to rub the wet and dirt off; some hounds baying at the earth, with their fine mellow tongues blending with the huntsman’s horn to get his tail hounds up; horses with heads down, wet, dirty, and all have had quite enough; and when many horses are together, there arises a mist like a November

fog. Many a hearty laugh at a hat that has been rolled over and crushed in, and many a dirty and torn coat. Some of those young men that came out smartest, look as if they had taken a contract for filling a scavenger's cart; but he that causes the most amusement is the officer that had such a ducking in the brook, and started with a splendid beard and moustache, which now clings to him as tight as the thatch on a cottage, and to cause still greater amusement, he is emptying his boots of water. Such is sport, and of every-day occurrence.

Now the flask of good old brandy or sherry is most acceptable. Here comes the second whip from the bridge, with two couples and a half of tail hounds, which make them nearly all up. After a little conversation the master of the hounds thinks they have had enough for the day; and if ever a good dinner is enjoyed, it is after a good run. I always think, a half hour, or even more, never ought to be thought of in going home. A merciful man has mercy on his beast; but I am sorry to say, so noble an animal as the horse is too frequently ill used. I always like to let a horse just have a quart or two of water, about half way home, at some pond by the road side; it is much better than water from a pump; it is softer and not so likely to disagree. And if you have merely walked a few miles, that excessive heat after a run has gone off, and there is no better time to give him a good wash; particularly after you have done so, if you trot gently for a mile, he does not require half the washing when he gets into the stable, and does not get

chilled. I am exceedingly fond of seeing horses in the stable at night, after they have been well dressed down and clothed, with a good bed of bright clean wheat straw under them, and also of caressing them ; it gives you an opportunity of knowing this has been done, which is not always the case when you think it is. A master's eye is always useful. After our early breakfast with its advantages, the late breakfast with its miseries, our ride, the meet, the hunt, which, I believe, is coloured very close from find to finish, the scene after he has gone to earth will also not prove overdrawn ; and I must now finish, by hoping some little knowledge of fox-hunting and its pleasures may be derived from this description.

A WORD ON HUNTSMEN—THEIR DUTIES, QUALIFICATION, &c.

Believe me, to be a good huntsman to a pack of fox-hounds requires qualifications not easily found and blended together in one person. In the first place, a strong constitution is absolutely necessary, for when a man has to hunt a pack three times a week, it is far from easy work ; it is not only his riding, but using the horn and holloaing to his hounds are very trying to the lungs. He ought to have a clear, musical voice, for it is at all times most pleasing to hear him drawing coverts, and speaking to his hounds in that language which must be learnt alone by custom, and which would puzzle any professor of language to teach or spell, and yet is so necessary for a man to understand, and to well

know how to vary, for most men fall into the habit of sameness. Blessed with strong health, it requires him to be patient, not easily provoked, for every huntsman has much to put up with; for instance, what can be more maddening than, after having drawn several coverts, and hearing his hounds drag up to their fox, and going away with a good scent, perhaps a field away from the covert in which he was found, hounds settling well to him, and every thing promising a good run, to have some unsportsmanlike rider head him back. Find me a huntsman who will say this is not too true; getting back into the same wood, another fox is moved, and half the morning lost. Do you not think this wants a man to be patient? He also ought to be quick both to hear and see, a quick and attentive ear to listen to every hound, the tongue of which he well knows, on drag or when making a hit in covert after a check, and knowing for certain whether he may holloa and encourage that hound with certainty; he also requires to be cool, collected, and quick, to enable him to make a good cast—one great and good qualification to do well; and here let me say, I think many men, in making a cast, merely make it from where the scent is fairly brought to; it is, my opinion, he always ought to drop back with his hounds at least twenty or thirty rods before he does so, for this reason: when hounds throw up and come to a check it is always caused by the fox heading back, and his heading is almost always occasioned by some object before him—horses at plough, a dog, and even a noise; he does not merely turn right or left, but

goes back all the distance I have mentioned, and perhaps much more, before he gets on his line where he was making for. As to riding, he must ride well, and, if possible, to be able to ride to advantage, he ought not to be over ten or eleven stone. Now, with all these qualities, he is then of no use without he can bring years of experience with him. A good huntsman to a pack of fox-hounds is possessed with all the gifts that would make a good officer; persons unacquainted, or only slightly so, would not deem all these qualities requisite. I do not feel, or wish to be thought, at all dictating to huntsmen by what is written here, but merely to make those to whom this work is addressed acquainted with the duties which belong to men hunting hounds. In going to a covert, which is intended to be drawn, I think it right, when within a short distance, to trot quickly, or even to gallop up, and throw in hounds with a dash, cheering them at the same time. I think enough has been said to make persons believe it is no easy task to hunt a pack of fox-hounds; and here I shall say again, it is the field that assists the huntsman, in their great care not to head a fox, or, on a cold-scented day, by not getting too near hounds, for, if so, over the scent you will drive them, and by so doing it is impossible to make a good cast.

We must now speak of the whips, and their duties in the field and in going to covert. It is usual, when passing through villages, and even along roads, for the first whip to ride some little distance before the huntsman, the second whip following the hounds

and keeping an eye on the pack, to prevent any from slipping away, and when at the meet to do the same. When hounds are thrown into covert to find their fox, it is customary for the first whip to get forward to the farthest part, and stand on some spot that commands a good view, and which ought to be quite out of sight, to prevent a fox stealing away or to tally him. Though this system is always followed, I object to it, for the following reasons:—The second whip follows the huntsman, and when a fox is found, stops in the covert, to get away any hounds that are left, which are called tail-hounds, and then gets them up to the huntsman as soon as he can. I object to a whip getting forward, because when a fox gets away, and is seen by him, he is at once tallied or holloaed away; immediately this is heard, away ride half the field to the spot, the huntsman has to hurry on his hounds, it causes much holloaing and confusion, and as it frequently happens that men at work some few fields away hear the first holloa, keep their eyes open and watch for the fox, holloa him, and when the huntsman brings up his hounds to the spot where he broke cover, he finds eight or ten men riding over the line of scent, and away to the second holloa; all this not at all becoming sportsmen. Now for my system, and its advantages. My whip should go forward, with this strict order—to prevent any of the field getting forward, and standing outside of the covert, which is certain to head the fox, to prevent foot people standing about, and to get every one into the covert, and to keep all as silent as possible; by so doing, you

are almost certain to let your fox get well away ; but do not holloa. If you hear your hounds hunting cheerfully, and coming away fast to you, hold your tongue, for be assured noise is the spoiler of hounds and sport ; but should the hounds not have found him, and you cannot hear them hunting him, then drop back to the huntsman, and tell him the fox is gone away, but do not holloa. By this plan you enjoy one of the most beautiful parts of the hunt ; that is, hearing all their tongues like a ring of bells, and seeing your hounds break covert, with that dash and determination which can only be seen in a pack of fox-hounds, and this is entirely lost when hounds are brought to the first holloa. We will now holloa “ Whoo whoop ” to fox-hunting.

THE MERRY HARRIERS.

We are now about touching on a sport certainly not equal to fox-hunting, yet on one which affords much amusement and pleasure to the real lover of hunting, for hare-hunting gives an opportunity of seeing hounds do their work, much more than with fox-hounds, the pace not being so fast, and it is very seldom that a hare goes straight away, generally running in a ring, and a person who does not care about riding up to hounds generally sees the sport, a feeling which does not exist at the present time, as it did formerly, when the old southern hound was so much in use for hare-hunting, and would hunt, on a hard turnpike-road, almost on ice or dust—all one to them—and the old men used to say, if they could not kill her in the day, they would

put up a stick, and begin there the next morning where they left off. This used to be the old story ; but *to reason*. When these slow southern hounds were in use, it was customary for the young to run, and perhaps some on a good stiff cob ; a hare used then to be fairly hunted, until she was run down. Then was the time they used to meet after the day's sport, have a good plain dinner, after which a good bowl of steaming punch was enjoyed, and I am afraid that one did not suffice them. With their pipe and glass, the toast went round, and the run was hunted over again ; the hounds had not gone fast enough to prevent it being recollected how well Countess hunted it up the lane, or how well they all picked it over the sticky fallow. These times are gone and past, a different system of hare-hunting exists, and which would, I think, be more enjoyed, if harriers were not so fast, or so high bred ; for if you get a view, and the fields are large, she is almost coursed ; and if the scent should be good, she is run into in a very short time. There are many packs of harriers fast, and with blood enough to kill a fox ; also horses are now seen in the field with harriers, that makes the hunt seem nothing. I think, if we had some of the real old hunting blood introduced into our kennels we should have more sport, our hares would not be overpowered, as they now are ; our hounds would give more sport, on cold scented days, for these fast harriers of the present day are too fast with a good scent, and on bad, you may hunt yourself. The same advice I gave in fox-hunting only needs to be recollected ; always be in good time, but it is not so abso-

lutely necessary ; for harriers, nine times out of ten, are always to be found somewhere in the neighbourhood of their meet. In looking for a hare, there is one almost certain rule, that is, to consider the wind. She will generally lay in a spot out of it ; if there is a bank in the field, laying full to the sun and sheltered, this is the spot. In grass on the south side of a warm hedge, and on stale ploughed ground ; and here let me say, you want a good eye, for she will frequently lay an inch or two under the level of the land, and behind a clod, almost her own colour. They are also extremely fond of laying on ground facing a wood, when they can see it. As a rule stale ground is most likely, and after Christmas on young wheat. When a hare is found, and when “So-ho !” is cried, hounds are so accustomed, that they will frequently go to the spot. There is a difference of opinion with masters of hounds. Some say it is always right to give the hounds a view ; some say first take the hounds away, then put her up ; after she is gone, take the hounds over her seat, without saying a word, and let them pick the scent up themselves. This, in my opinion, is by far the best, for this reason : The hounds have to hunt from the first ; are not made wild by the view ; do not race themselves out of wind, and the hare is much more likely to give a good run, by not being overstrained at first. Now, when she is gone, let me impress on your minds never ride too close to your hounds, for there is no danger, but you can always get up to harriers. As I have said with a fox, when the scent is cold, keep away from your hounds, and more par-

ticularly with a hare, for it is from wonderful instinct that she beats hounds, by making sudden heads. In hunting harriers I never wish to see horses, and indeed they never ought to be nearer than twenty rods to the hounds. Hares will very frequently run a long way down lanes, then return up the same, and then, with a long spring or jump, throw themselves into the hedge, or, if not, slip back under the hedge, out of sight, and make back to the spot where they were found. A man, to make a good huntsman, ought to be, for a pack of harriers, very slow, and patient. And to have a good pack, he must let them do the work themselves, to the very last moment, and when he sees they have tried, and done their best, he may then make his cast; for if you accustom them in coming to a check, to assist at once. Their heads are always up, instead of their noses being down. Sport in a great measure always much depends on how the field ride even with fox-hounds, but much more so with hare-hounds. The old saying, "Give the huntsman and hounds plenty of room to work," is a wise one, and should be recollected at all times. I do not know what I can add more than to wish the reader may have many a good hunt, with both fox-hounds and with the merry harriers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROD.

THE TROUT-FISHER'S DREAM.

How I dream in the winter
Of flower-blooming spring,
And think of the pleasures
Trout-fishing will bring !

That I'll rise with the sun,
At break of the day,
And down to the meadows
With its earliest ray.

With my rod and my net,
The fly-book and reel,
My waterproof stockings,
And my light wicker creel.

When the meadows are gay
With bright blooming flowers,
How sweet is their scent
With the first morning showers !

O what can be dearer
Than the trout-fisher's life,
When away from the world,
Full of envy and strife ?

Who can tell the pure pleasure
That trout-fishers feel,
When they put their first fish
In their old wicker creel ?

So much has been written on fishing by very experienced persons, that this chapter must be very

short, and will only allude to fly-fishing, as I must confess to be almost ignorant of the use of the ground-bait. Spinning for trout with the minnow is next to fly-fishing, and I have no doubt is very exciting. The largest fish are taken in this way; and the best methods are to be obtained from any good work on angling. As I am not a ground-bait fisher or troller, I shall not endeavour to say anything on the subject. Fly-fishing affords great pleasure in many ways, as it commences about the beginning of April, at a time when Nature begins to clad the meadows with their carpet of beautiful green, interwoven with flowers of every colour, and the fresh passing shower, making every bud ready to burst, and bringing a fresh perfume from the early spring flowers. Even this must make the fisher delight in his walk to the streamlet side. The river sparkling in the sun, as it ripples over bright stones, or rushes round some old decayed stub, covered with mosses of various tints; the willow wavering in the soft mild breeze, and, as it gently dips in the clear water, causes a soft sweet murmuring sound most pleasing to the ear and soothing to the mind, and by such scenes as these the fisher is constantly surrounded.

“ What is like a fisher’s life,
Free from envy, care, or strife ? ”

Now let us put our rod together—a new one, I must suppose, as I am now writing to those that never threw a fly, or tried to catch a trout. Put your plugs, rings to keep your rod together, into the

case ; tie a knot in the end, place it safely in your pocket : this will prevent loss and vexation, when you leave off. In putting your rod together, keep the rings in a perfect line—this will keep the rod straight, and in its proper position. As you put the first joint into the butt, or lower and largest piece, press them together tightly ; use a little twist in so doing ; the other joints the same. Put your reel on, and draw your line clear from the reel, close to the rod. Run it through all the rings, and pull about a yard or two of line over the end. You are, of course, provided with your fly-book, containing flies, which have been recommended to you at some first-rate shop. Also, you have added two or three bottoms of fine gut—three yards is the length—used by experienced men ; but I should advise a beginner to try two first. It is difficult to throw well at beginning, and with three yards it is more so. You put the bottom on the line, by passing one loop through the other, taking care to put the thickest part next the line. A good rod, line and bottom, with the fly on, forms almost one gradual taper, and with a rod of medium flexibility, the throwing of the line properly, will soon be learnt. To begin, choose some spot clear from trees, bushes, or even flags or weeds growing on the edge of the river. And where the water runs fast, and ripples along, I choose this spot because the line is not so likely to be seen by the fish ; for, believe me—and this you will find true—that nothing is so quick as the eye of a trout. Now I will give you my opinion as to what will make a good fly-

fisher, and rules to become one. The first is, to keep well back from the river, so far that fish cannot see you. Learn to throw beautifully light, so that the line, even in smooth water, does not make a mark. Get the wind to your back, which assists you much in throwing. If you can get the wind to suit, fish up stream, throwing obliquely on the river, and drawing the fly playfully across the stream. In doing so, keep the top of the rod well up; this will make the fly swim on the surface, and imitate the natural fly. In throwing, bring the line over your head, in a circle from the left side, which will prevent your snapping the fly off, which will at first be done, if thrown straight. Do not try to throw too much line at first; try about three or four yards of line, which, with the gut, will make five or six yards altogether. Keep your eye attentively on your fly as it ripples on the water. On seeing a fish rise, strike gently, which you do by a twist of the wrist, and gently lifting the top of the rod up. Supposing you have hooked your fish, keep your rod up, and wait to see what he intends to do. Sometimes they will jump up out of the water, and then dart off; never pull hard, let him have it all his own way at first, but keep your line tight, without pulling. Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to use sufficient strength to stop him getting under roots of trees, or into large lumps of weeds; in fact, let the fish tire himself by pulling against your rod, which being, I may say, elastic, will give way to his struggles; only keep the top up and your hand steady. You will then find

up he will come to the top of the water ; now is the time to land him ; wind up your line so that you can lead him where you like. Look for a nice clear spot below the fish ; there make your boy lie down flat on the grass, just near enough for him to see the water, *yet not be seen* by the fish. Let the boy put the landing-net just under the water a few inches, then draw your fish over the net ; let the boy gently lift the net, and he is safe. Many persons I have seen, when landing a fish, stand close to the river, and many a good fish I have seen lost by this foolish method. If the trout has the least strength left, on seeing any one near the bank, he will plunge away, and very often saves his life. With your new rod, I forgot to suppose, you had obtained a new basket and landing-net, which to a trout-fisher is most necessary.

After you have taken your fish off, do not lay it on the grass, particularly if the bank is sloping ; he perhaps will recover himself, jump about, and get into the river. This will seem to some an extraordinary caution ; it is necessary, for I once saw a lady, who had seen much fly-fishing, take up a rod which a gentleman had left, and, after a few throws, caught a good trout ; taking it off, she laid it on the bank, and began to fish again. To her great surprise and chagrin, the fish, as before stated, jumped into the river, and was gone. I must tell you of a luckier trout than this : I once caught a fish, put it into my basket which was nearly full, and which hung on my back. I immediately caught another, and, not having any one with me, I wound my line up short,

and, by bringing the tip of my rod over my shoulder, drew my fish to the edge of the water. Stooping down to land the trout, my fish in the basket began to slip out. The one just put into the basket, fell on the steep bank, and got into the river—a *lucky fish*!

Here are reasons for being careful. With respect to flies, you will find a great variety almost every week from the first month till the last; the small red hacket, both plain and with a gold twist, are good flies, at times, all the season. Hofland's fancy, the hare's ear, blue dun, and, at the earliest part of the season, the March brown, will be found killing flies. I will defy the most experienced fisher to tell you when trout are going to rise well. I have known, from early morning till the middle of the day, scarcely to get a rise, and then for an hour or two they rose as freely; indeed no one can say for certain the best time of the day. As a general rule, I have always found from ten till three at the early part of the season; when the weather gets hot, unless it is very cloudy and wet, morning and afternoon; and later in the season, there is no doubt early morning and evening, as long as you can see, is the time to take fish. Of a summer evening, the coachman and white moth are always freely taken; the May-fly varies in its coming on the water very much, in different rivers, even for a week or fortnight. This is a fly taken more greedily than any other; so much so, that trout glut themselves to that extent that they seldom take flies so well afterwards. Dabbling is most destructive, and in some rivers it is not allowed. The method is this: have a very long rod, with about two yards of very fine and strong gut to

the end of your line, which wind up close to the rod ; get some boys to go with you, and catch flies ; have a middle size trout-hook, place the fly on the hook just below the wings. Keeping well back from the water, just dib the fly in the runs of water close under banks, and, if there is a trout there, take it he will. At some places it is called poaching, in others looked forward to and thought fair fishing. The artificial May-fly is made and to be had at all shops, but I never saw a good one yet, neither did I ever kill many fish with them. Speaking of the uncertainty as to fish rising, a keeper at Whitchurch, in Hampshire, where there is a club, told me the best day's fishing was the first, and then they begin early in March ; the fish were so greedy that they even rose at single snow-flakes when they touched the water. The Hampshire rivers are extremely difficult to fish with success even by good hands ; unless it is windy and wet, the water is so transparent, the bottom white sand and gravel, that it is almost impossible to kill in bright weather. Trout, I am sorry to say, are getting very scarce in most rivers from want of care, and by what is still worse, bleach and poison being thrown in from paper mills. As a proof of this, in the River Darent, about 1820, I had a most extraordinary day. I killed with a fly thirty-six brace of as fine trout as ever lay together, and never shall I forget seeing them lay on the red tiles of a cellar, with a light held over them. At the same place I took twenty-six brace in a day, and sixteen at two different times ; now—how different at the same spot this season—I was obliged to go home

with two brace. It is not only the pleasure of fishing, and killing a good basket of fish, but to any one fond of Nature, and particularly if fond of sketching and painting, here is an everlasting source of amusement. I have been extremely amused by seeing the chaffinch and dishwashers, sitting on boughs over-hanging the river, watching the May-fly, as it came floating down, in the sharp runs of water, and feeding themselves by catching the insect from off the water, for hours together. I have seen the trout, just as the bird dropped to take it, get the fly first, and also at times the trout would be too late, the bird being rather too quick for the fish. As NERVE is the foundation of good shooting, so keeping well away from the water, fishing with the finest of tackle, and throwing beautifully light, is the only sure method to ensure success.

Hoping the reader will have and enjoy as many days' fishing as I have done, and will gain some little insight into shooting, hunting and fishing, by this little work ; and if the rules laid down are followed out by beginners in sporting, I feel confident they will not feel afraid to meet the old Sportsman, either in the field or the saddle, or by the streamlet side.

Having compressed all I have learnt by sixty years' experience into a few lines, I must now conclude, by subscribing myself,

Yours, most humbly,

JOHN WALTER.

Woodland House, Stone, Kent,

November 25th, 1869.

SPORTING PHRASES.

IN SHOOTING.

A man does not *fire* at his birds, he *shoots*.

A covey of birds do not *fly up*, they *rise*.

Pheasants the same, they are *sprung*.

Woodcocks, ditto, they are *flushed*.

Snipes, ditto, ditto.

Game, after flying, do not settle, they *drop*.

In trying to find game, the ground is worked, hunted, or beaten.

Pointers or setters, on finding their game, are said to *stand*.

The dog which does not find, but *stands*, is said to *back*.

Dogs that move, after finding, are said to break their point.

A pointer that runs after a hare or rabbit, is checked by calling "Ware, flick, d——y."

A dog is not scolded, *he is rated*.

A covey of partridges, not a *brood*; a *nide* of young pheasants, ditto; two birds, a *brace of birds*; three birds, a *leash*; a *bevy* of quails.

Game ought always to be carried feet downwards; hares and rabbits, head downwards.

A couple of cocks (woodcocks); couple of snipes; a brace of hares; a couple of rabbits; a couple of wild ducks; and all wild fowl.

A hare *sits* in her seat, or form.

Pointers are said to *wind* their game, not *smell* it.

Partridges, after being separated, *call* together.

HUNTING PHRASES.

The word dog should never be used, either speaking of fox-hounds or harriers; nothing stamps a man for being ignorant of sporting more than this.

Hounds, on going into a wood to find, are said to be thrown into covert. When a hound comes on the scent of a fox, he is said to touch on the drag. When a fox has gone away, and hounds are hunting him, they are on his line, or the line of scent. If any one turns him, and makes him come back, he is then said to have been *headed*. When a huntsman tries the hounds round in a circle, he is said to make his cast. It is frequently said, when a hound opens on the scent, that "I heard Countess *challenge* in the coppice." When the scent is very *good*, you say there is a burning scent; or they run breast-high. When horses cannot overtake the hounds, you say the horses could not live with them, or touch them. When hounds run well together, and spread out wide in crossing a field, they carry a good head; on the contrary, when there is a line, they say they run taily. A fox does not go into a hole, he goes to ground, or it is more sporting-like to say "They earthed him." A fox has not got a *tail*, only a *brush*; the white tip on the brush is the *tag*. A fox, when killed, "Whoo whoop! Whoo whoop!" is called; "Tally-ho!" when first seen. A fox, when killed, and hung on a bough, is bayed at by the hounds; a fox that slips away, without being

seen at the time, or hunted, steals away. Where the wood is very grassy and thick at bottom, you say there is good lodging there. As to teach the manner hounds ought to be spoken to at different times, or to spell the language, would puzzle all the linguists or professors of languages in the world; it is brought on by custom, and only to be learnt by listening to huntsmen, whippers-in and men who are, and have been, constantly with hounds.

The fisher's language requires, I think, no remark.

